

Atlantic Coast Conference Men's Basketball Championship

Thursday, March 13, 2025

Charlotte, North Carolina, USA

Spectrum Center

Duke Blue Devils

Jon Scheyer

Isaiah Evans

Khaman Maluach

Postgame Press Conference



controlled our entire defense the second half and did a great job talking, protecting the rim, finishing. The two-man game with him and Kon was great. I know you'll ask these guys questions first, but I'm very proud. Very proud of the win.

Q. For both players, Coop goes down, Maliq goes down. Beginning of the second half, I saw all of y'all come together. What did y'all say to each other, and what was it that ignited that fire?

ISAIAH EVANS: We were just going to stay together. Obviously, Coop is a huge part of our team. It hurts to see him going down, same with 'Liq, but it's next man up, and we're going to keep picking our guys up.

KHAMAN MALUACH: As he said, we stayed together. We went in the locker room and we spoke to each other, and we're like, we've got to step up and pick our teammates up, and that's what we did in the senior.

Q. Isaiah, how much are you enjoying being back home and having success close to home?

ISAIAH EVANS: It's great. Air smells great. You know what I'm saying? I'm just glad to be back home, glad to put on a show for the home crowd. But most importantly, I'm glad just to advance to the next round.

Q. Isaiah, what's always given you that confidence in those moments that we know you had in high school? I'm sure you had it before that. What drives that confidence for you?

ISAIAH EVANS: Just staying in the gym consistently, shooting those same shots that I get in the game, and then once that first one goes in -- every shooter knows once the first one goes in, it's a completely different game. So just staying consistently in the gym, getting the same reps in with Coach Dildy, my assistant coaches, and keeping the main thing the maintaining?

Q. Khaman, you and Kon had a bunch of lobs, a bunch of connections on the pick-and-roll. Can you talk about your chemistry on that play and how you

Duke 78, Georgia Tech 70

JON SCHEYER: Well, obviously that was a different kind of game for us. And, you know, I couldn't be more proud of the heart, the character, the competitiveness of our team. I don't know if we've started off a game 0 for 13 from three. It wasn't going easy for us. I thought Isaiah really broke it open. His energy, obviously his shot making, and then the job, Khaman gets two fouls, Maliq gets hurt, and then Pat, the job he did, coming into the game to pick us up, he had a great block at the rim, had some good finishes, and then all of a sudden at halftime, it's five, which is a big deal.

Then our response to start the second half, and different guys stepping up, Mason starts right away, Isaiah continued, Kon throughout the game. I thought we were really just -- I thought our defense was back to being what it should be on that end in the second half, and we saw the ball go in.

I'll just tell you real quick, Maliq was in a lot of pain, and he re-dislocated his shoulder. That's why -- I'm sure some of you saw it, we got him a stretcher just because -- to tolerate the pain. He was in a lot of pain. He's at the hospital now. We'll figure out how he's doing. I'm going to try to figure out if I can go see him right now.

Cooper, he just came down, sprained his ankle, X-rays were negative, which is great. We just have to understand there's going to be swelling and see how he recovers and how he goes from there.

But proud of this team to step up without two of our key guys. A big reason is the two guys next to me. Khaman



... when all is said, we're done.®

guys have been able to find so much success consistently?

KHAMAN MALUACH: I feel like throughout the whole season, our connection has been growing, me with most of my teammates. We've been working on it, whether it's in practice or after practices, in shootaround. I feel like we still have more room, and we'll keep getting better.

Q. When you're in a hole like that and it's rare, how do you regroup yourselves? What's the motivation and strategy that gets you back into a game like this one, when threes aren't falling and teams are off to a good start?

KHAMAN MALUACH: I mean, I feel like in such moments, us just being us and trusting what we do and trusting what we do in practices and trust ourselves and pick each other up, like hype each other up, trusting what we do, trusting our defense especially, that's what gets us out of such moments.

ISAIAH EVANS: Yeah, same. I think it's just our connectivity. I think we're one of the more connected groups. You never really see us get really frustrated at each other. It's really more just talking through it, figuring out what the issue is, and moving on to the next play.

Q. Khaman, I did see you hit three-pointers in warmups, but the question is for Isaiah because he hit them during the game. Shooting can be streaky and you started cold from the field. What was the message from your coach, and what's the mentality when you see the shots not falling the way they usually do?

KHAMAN MALUACH: I don't think there is a message. A lot of the things we do go without being said. We all know at this point what our roles are on the team, and when I step in, I'm just trying to execute my role to the fullest extent. So when I'm in there, I'm just trying to help us win the only way I know how.

Q. At the under-4:00 time-out, you guys come out, Kon gets a bucket, you guys get a couple blocks and then, Isaiah, you hit your first three. During that 43 seconds where you forced Georgia Tech to call a time-out to stop any sort of momentum that you guys were gaining?

ISAIAH EVANS: Just stops. Just stops, putting together stops. We know how good we are on offense. Offense is going to take care of itself. That's something the coaches preach to us. But it's the defense that carries us into the offense.

Q. Isaiah, what was going through your mind when you saw Cooper go down? What were you thinking? What was your reaction?

ISAIAH EVANS: Oh, man, it hurt just to see one of my brothers go down. We all just want to see each other play ball. This is what we love to do, so when someone goes down, it's hard. Same thing with Maliq. We just told each other, we got you, we're going to pick you up, and we got you.

Q. What does it say about this team that you guys were able to -- I think when Cooper went down, you were down nine, but that you were able to rally back and win this game?

ISAIAH EVANS: I think it just shows that we're a real team. It's not really about one person or two people. It's about Duke. Duke is going to handle business all the time. That's what we came here to do, we came here to play ball. No matter the circumstances, whatever happens throughout the game, we're going to keep playing.

Q. Watching you come off the bench, and over the season just gathering up the minutes, can you talk about the mentality throughout the season and watching your growth?

ISAIAH EVANS: The mentality has just been doing whatever I need to do to get on the court, and then when I'm on the court, do whatever I need to do to help us win.

Right now, that's playing defense, hitting shots, rebounding, being a great teammate, giving us energy, so that's what I'm going to do every game.

Q. Khaman and Isaiah, I know Jon is sitting next to you, but can you tell us what the message was from the coaches at halftime? You've got two of your top six, seven players who are out for the rest of the game. What did they say to you guys about focus in the second half?

KHAMAN MALUACH: They just told us to go out there and be us, play free, and get stops. That's what we did.

ISAIAH EVANS: Yeah, I mean, it was just that, it was just defense. I felt like we just let them see too many easy ones go in. I felt like they were bullying us around a little bit. We just came in with a whole 'nother mentality. We weren't going to be pushed around. We were going to be the aggressors, and we were going to set the tone the second half.

Q. Jon, Isaiah just said that he thought Georgia Tech

 . . . when all is said, we're done.®

was bullying you guys a little bit in the first half, especially offensively. What were your observations of your defense?

JON SCHEYER: Of our defense you said? Well, on our defense, look, I'm pretty sure -- I mean, they ended up with 31 in the first half. It's not like they were scoring like crazy. Obviously, I thought we gave up some open looks, but they got the margin. We had 12 points with -- I think it was seven minutes to go in the first half. So it's hard for us -- obviously I thought we were doing a decent job.

I felt their physicality was way better than ours. They came out, they're older -- if you've been watching Georgia Tech the last two years with the job that Damon does, they're a dangerous team to play. There's a reason they've beat some of the best teams in our league the last two years.

For me, it was just the lack of execution or just missing shots, and then that snowballed for us in the first half.

Q. How do you weigh if Cooper is available sooner than later, when he can come back versus maybe what your long-term goals are as a team? You know he's going to want to play as soon as he can. Factoring that all in.

JON SCHEYER: Well, I already know how he's wired. And look, to be honest with you, I would have to be, like, convinced by everybody in the locker room when I go back there that he should play. It's not worth it. It just isn't.

Again, he was swollen already. It's not about being ready to go tomorrow. That's not the most important thing for us. We've got to see if we can get him right for this run that we can make in the tournament.

But I would have to be really convinced that we should even consider seeing if he can go tomorrow. He may not be able to go anyway. He probably won't be able to go anyway. But I think it's a real long shot. A real long shot.

Q. Coach, you started your comments with "this was a different game." How was it going through all that without coach Lucas for the first time?

JON SCHEYER: Yeah, obviously. I think it was a lot different. Jay is my guy. But when you're in the moment, you're thinking about coaching your players. That's really all that's happening.

We've been preparing for this, and you have to be able to coach to your instincts no matter what. We have a great staff to step up, which they did.

But I think it was different because of how disjointed the first half was. But yeah, I think there were a bunch of firsts for tonight's game. Today's game.

Q. Similarly with Maliq, you mentioned he re-dislocated, already had that injury. Do you have any sort of idea in terms of the prognosis? Is he going to be able to rejoin you guys for your run in March?

JON SCHEYER: I don't, and I'd rather not speculate. Obviously, he's going to miss time no matter what. I mean, this is going to be -- is there a chance at some point? I would hope so. But my main concern is just seeing him in such pain. I would hate to speculate without really knowing.

Q. Jon, you had time at halftime to regroup and kind of reset the motivation and everything. On the fly after losing Coop and already being down Maliq, what was your message to the guys as you're huddling there getting ready to send them back out on the court?

JON SCHEYER: Really my message was to do simple. Sometimes you see Maliq go out, Cooper go out, and you feel like you have to really make up for it with amazing plays and offense and scoring, when in reality, you need to do your job.

For us, I thought we just did simple a lot better in the second half, guarding the ball, being in the right positioning, simple plays on offense.

That was my biggest thing. Just to do simple. That was it.

Q. (Indiscernible).

JON SCHEYER: I think most of it was psychology. I really do. I think most of it was. I think we're going to look back and see most of the shots in the first half were good ones. Maybe some were rushed, but we had a different look than we normally have. Didn't have the poise. Then defensively, we let them score impact our offense, which we haven't done, either. You have to give them a ton of credit. Damon does a great job.

But for me, it was about settling them down and understanding that it wasn't about just making a shot. It was just about doing the simple things that lead to winning.

Q. Coach, when you get into cold spells like Duke was in the first few minutes at the three, it can be frustrating. How do you, as a coach, coach the mentality of, hey, calm down, don't get frustrated, just keep going at it, you'll hit it?

JON SCHEYER: I think the last time we played Georgia Tech I was a player here, and I couldn't make a shot, so I don't know if it's something about playing these guys in the tournament or what.

I actually think the fact we won, it was great for us to go through that because it's been -- we've been scoring a lot of points, and that's not realistic for what you're going to face in the postseason run.

I just thought we did a great job doing the simple things and guarding.

Q. You lose Cooper in the first half, Kon finishes with 28 and 8. A lot of that was free throws at the end, but you put him in those ball screens at the end and he got someone on his hip. How comforting is it to know you have a guy that makes those decisions like that?

JON SCHEYER: It's huge. For Kon, he plays at a great pace. He has great size, which allows him to score over the top, or pass, and then you surround him with shooting still. You come in with Mason or Isaiah, and Tyrese already, Sion, and him and Khaman have developed a great two-man game, and I think you saw that tonight.

It puts teams in a position, what do you do. I've never seen them switch. They start switching late. Usually they drop, and Kon does a great job of probing and getting in the paint.

Q. Can you talk about how big it was, the run you made before halftime, and being able to get the crowd finally back in the game?

JON SCHEYER: Yeah, I thought that was everything. For us, we've talked the whole year about inflection points in the game. There's always moments that can make or break you or define if you have a better chance of winning the game. My message in the under-4:00 time-out was just cut the lead. Win these four minutes. We'll figure it out at halftime.

I thought there was a big run we had, and to cut it to five, the fact it's a two-possession game, it could have easily been 15. It could have easily been 20 actually.

That was probably the biggest part of the game.

Q. This was your first game without defensive coordinator Jai Lucas since you've been at Duke. How did you adjust your coaching staff without Coach Lucas on the bench?

JON SCHEYER: Really it's just like when I was in there for

a game and these other guys. You've just got to step up. At the end of the day, our guys, I give them a ton of responsibility, but I have to own our defense and our offense. Like, that has to come from my vision and what we're doing totally as a staff.

So Jai, for me, has been a key entrusted guy, but for us, it's business as usual. We have to step up and be ready to go. Emanuel, Chris and our entire staff has done a great job of just picking up the load and making sure it doesn't feel different.

Again, hopefully, it's more smooth sailing than tonight was, but our staff has been great, and at the end of the day, that's going to fall on me.

FastScripts by ASAP Sports